

Application No.: 10/612,631  
Amdt dated: August 1, 2006  
Reply to Office action of May 4, 2006

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Original) A securing mechanism for securing a pair of free ends of a suture, comprising:
  - a first interlocking member; and
  - a second interlocking member operable of mating with said first interlocking member,wherein the first and second interlocking members provide
  - a first position for capturing the suture ends,
  - a second position for guiding and aligning the suture ends to a preferred location along a tortuous path within and between the first and second interlocking members, and
  - a third position for frictionally engaging the suture ends to provide secure entrapment of the suture, andwherein each of said interlocking members has
  - at least one protrusion and at least one mating hole, and
  - a standing portion and a mating window.
2. (Original) The securing mechanism of Claim 1, wherein the protrusions are cylindrical and are sized and configured to match opposing mating holes.
3. (Original) The securing mechanism of Claim 1, wherein the protrusions further comprise barbs or have increased end diameters to engage opposing mating holes in a fixed relationship when fully mated.

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4. (Original) The securing mechanism of Claim 1, wherein the mating windows are sized and configured to receive opposing standing portions.

5. (Original) The securing mechanism of Claim 1, wherein the standing portions and mating windows are sized and configured to engage and confine the suture ends.

6. (Original) The securing mechanism of Claim 1, wherein the assembly of the interlocking members may be advanced, retracted or adjusted along the length of the suture.

7. (Original) The securing mechanism of Claim 1, wherein the standing portions further comprise locking or latching features.

8. (Original) The securing mechanism of Claim 7, wherein the mating windows further comprise receiving portions to mate with the locking features of the standing portions.

9. (Original) The securing mechanism of Claim 1, wherein the interlocking members are formed of plastics of the same genus as the suture.

10. (Original) The securing mechanism of Claim 1, wherein the interlocking members are formed of metal.

11. (Original) The securing mechanism of Claim 10, wherein the metal includes stainless steel, titanium, silver, gold and aluminum.

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12. (Original) The securing mechanism of Claim 10, wherein the metal is malleable.

13. (Original) The securing mechanism of Claim 1, wherein the interlocking members are formed of plastic and metal.

Claims 14-21 (Canceled).

22. (New) The securing mechanism of Claim 3, wherein the barbs or increased end diameters are in a non-contacting relationship with the suture.

23. (New) The securing mechanism of Claim 7 wherein the locking or latching features of the standing portions are in a non-contacting relationship with the suture.

24. (New) The securing mechanism of claim 1 wherein the standing portions of one of the first interlocking member and the second interlocking member are extendable through the mating window of one of the first interlocking member and the second interlocking member and foldable onto an exterior surface of one of the first interlocking member and the second interlocking member away from the suture.

25. (New) The securing mechanism of claim 1 wherein the first interlocking member has a first length and a first width and the second interlocking member has a second length and a second width, the second length corresponding to the first length and the second width corresponding to the first width.

26. (New) A securing mechanism for securing a pair of free ends of a suture, comprising:

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a first interlocking member having:

- a base,
- a protrusion extending from a periphery of the base,
- a standing portion extending from the base adjacent to the protrusion, the protrusion being substantially smaller than the standing portion,
- a mating window disposed through the base adjacent to the standing portion, and
- a mating hole disposed through the base adjacent to the first mating window, the mating hole being substantially smaller than the mating window; and

a second interlocking member operably connecting with the first interlocking member, the second interlocking member having:

- at least one protrusion and at least one mating hole, and
- a standing portion and a mating window.

27. (New) A securing mechanism of claim 26 the standing portion of the first interlocking member having a free end away from an end fixed to the base of the first interlocking member, the free end having two substantially straight portions extending substantially perpendicular to the base of the first interlocking member with a substantially curved portion connecting the two generally straight portions together.

28. (New) A securing mechanism for securing a pair of free ends of a suture, comprising:

a first interlocking member having:

- a base with a length, a width, a first half and a second half, the width being equal or smaller than the length,
- a first protrusion extending from the first half of the base,
- a standing portion extending widthwise from the first half of the base adjacent to the first protrusion,

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a mating window disposed through the second half of the base adjacent to the standing portion and extending widthwise on the second half of the base, and

a mating hole disposed through the second half of the base adjacent to the mating window, the mating hole being substantially smaller than the mating window; and

a second interlocking member having:

a protrusion operably connecting with the mating hole of the first interlocking member,

a mating hole operably connecting with the first protrusion of the first interlocking member,

a standing portion operably connecting with the mating window of the first interlocking member, and

a mating window operably connecting with the standing portion of the first interlocking member.

29. (New) The securing mechanism of claim 28 wherein the standing portion of the first interlocking member has a width and a length, the width being equal to or greater than the length and the length of the standing portion of the first interlocking member being less than the length of the base of the first interlocking member.